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XXXVI

THE TALENSE (*continued*)

Ceremonies in Connexion with Sowing and Harvest. The Talense Calendar

527 THERE appear to be at least three great festivals which are held by the Talense in connexion with the crops and harvest. These are:

(*a*) *Gologo*, held in the month of February by the whole of the Talense.

b) *Bugram Waa* (lit. the *Bugram* dance) held in October by the following towns: Sia, Winduri, Gorogo, Wakyi, Teŋ'zugu, and Gbeo.

(*c*) *Da koom*, *Da mey* or simply *Waa*, (the dance) held by Bade and Tongo, in the months of August and September.

[171] Among the Nankanse we have seen that the October festival is called *Tingana* (the Groves), or simply *Waa* (the Dance), a festival which is held by Winkoŋo, Orogo, Kologo, and Na, in rotation.

(*a*) *The Gologo Ceremony*: It was my intention to have attended this ceremony in person; hence I omitted to obtain a full description of it. I am informed, however, that during the time when the festival is being held 'every one is permitted to abuse his neighbour and even to laugh at any physical deformity, and that no one is allowed to quarrel'. [171] All this seems most reminiscent of the *Apo* ceremony, which has been described in another volume.[1] Circumstances, however, prevented me ever carrying out my intention, and a full description of this ceremony must be left to some other historian to record. I hope an account of it will be obtained before the extraordinarily rapid changes in conditions in these parts have interfered with or altered its characteristic observances.

527 793 796 535 *The Da koom and Da mey Ceremonies*: 'When we dance these, all our ancestors sleep. When the time approaches for the ceremonies, the *Ten'dan*' of Bade takes a calabash (*zu-gur*, lit. a head-calabash), puts it in a net, and hangs it outside the entrance to the *zoŋo* hut. When the rain falls, it is filled. Before dawn, early in the morning after the appearance of the new moon, the Bat (*Anglice* Bade) *Ten'dan*' pours out

[1] See *Ashanti*, Chapter XV.

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some of the water from this calabash on the ground, saying: 'Your day is drawing near, and I wish to pour water for you that the corn may be good. Your moon stands.' A little only of the water is poured out, but the remainder is kept until the next moon, which is the *Daa mey* (or 'real' *Daa*). The first water is called *Ko'-beet* (bad water); the water poured out later is called *Ko'soŋ* (good water). Until the *Ten'dan'* of Bade has performed this ceremony no one may begin to hold the custom; we dance thirty nights at the grove. Seven days after the bad water is poured out, beer and a fowl are given to the land with the words:

'*Misore* and his father wish to come forth; receive, and let the women and children come out to dance and let the men meet them there. Prevent headache and belly-ache and may everything bad on the land (snakes, scorpions) hide away.'

As they dance they sing: *La pug dill* (the corn is blooming).

At the end of thirty days the Bade *Ten'dan'* pours out the rest of the water on the ground, saying: 'This is the good water I am pouring to-day; may the land become good; may women bear children and the corn become good.' He pours out the whole of the water. The *Daa mey* has now arrived and the people dance for fifteen nights, singing: *Laa moo zimi* (It [the corn] is red). Every one assembles by the full moon at the grove called *Pusig* (the name of a tree now no longer standing).

The *Ten'dan'* of Gbeo sacrifices at *Misore's* grave.[1] When he reaches the grove, he takes some beer, flour, and a fowl, which the Chief of Tongo has given him, and sacrifices at the spot where the *pusig* tree used to stand, saying to the land: 'The Chief gives me these things for you because the days (of the festival) are ending. We wish to return the drums to the house; allow the women and children to sleep in peace; allow the men to go hunting.' He then makes the sacrifices.

The drums, called *Tusgunwaa*, are kept by the Chief and are never brought out except at this ceremony or at a death. '*Daa* is a dance on the land that it may know all is well.'

Formerly the day of sowing was common to all, so all harvests became ripe at the same time. Now people plant independently, so that the reaping is done at different times. The *Da koom* may not be held until all the *nara* is cut, so that the date is not now constant.

[1] See *History*, Chapter XXXIII.

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kills a beast, I receive some, not otherwise. I own the land in the bush, not so the *Godan*.

'Things found on the land, except beads, belong to the *Ten'dan*', also lost fowls, iron, worked or unworked, goats, sheep, and cows. A horse or a donkey goes to the Chief; these are not permitted to enter my kraal. If any one found these things and kept them, his home would break. The finder of beads, guinea-fowls, a cloth, cowries, may keep them if not claimed, but if the cowries[1] were many, he would give some to the Chief and to the *Ten'dan*'. A lost child belongs to the Chief; it is forbidden for a *Ten'dan*' to take such a one, she may not eat anything with hairs (i.e. a person).'

Tattooing: A *Ten'dan*' must not have tattoo marks, but markings called *Taavelem* do not matter.[2]

Harvest Festivals: 'Beans, ground-nuts, and new crops must first be given to the groves, after which every one may eat. Only naked people may go to the groves. A *Ten'dan*' has to be so careful not to eat new crops before the groves have done so, that, when the corn is ripening, his water-pots have to be covered over to prevent any grain from being blown into them.' He concluded the above by stating: 'Our ancestors did not come from any other place. *Na Wen* (God) created our *Yaba* and allowed him to be on the land. No stranger can possess *ten-kur* (land stones).[3] Formerly we called our land Zug, and there were only thorns upon it. Then the Dagbama (Dagomba) came and ate the Chieftainship and called the land Gohe-nam or Nangoot. Our mother's children are the *Ten'dan*' of Pals (near Zuarono). They went there from this place. Our taboo is red clay; we do not use it for plastering the walls of compounds.'[4]

A rapid survey of other matters, fully described in previous chapters, revealed everywhere a uniform similarity in customs and beliefs with those of their neighbours. A more intensive investigation will no doubt reveal differences in detail here and there, but the task of recording these I must leave to others and pass on to examine the next tribe, the Kusase.

[1] See p. 378.
[2] This prohibition was, I was informed, only local.
[3] See p. 256.
[4] See footnote 6, p. 244.

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	Approximate Period.	Explanation.
2. Gunfuku	February	Gun', gunga—kapok tree. fuku—blowing of the wind. The period when the kapok pods ripen. This is evidence of the Dagomba extraction of this people, since kapok is, undoubtedly, a southern production. Their own tradition says they came from the south as a result of interfamily wars.
3. Gologu	March	This is the name of a festival which takes place shortly after full moon. In 1921 the ceremonial dancing and symbolic planting of corn, which I witnessed by good luck, took place on March 1st. In 1922 about March 13th.
4. Sionbeo	End of March or early April	Time of early planting. Sion—making holes in which to drop the grains. beo—poor. At this time it is not certain if the dry season will not return for a period and so dry up the first shoots.
5. Sionsongo	April and May	The time of good planting. songo—good. This is the proper planting time.
6. Sionyio	Late May and early June	The time of late planting. yio—conveys an idea of doubt. Planting at this time may or may not have a result.
7. Narechag	Late June and early July	Early millet harvest. Nare—early millet. chag'—cut.
8. Naliri	Late July, mid August	Na'—early millet. biri—small. The time for eating the small ears of early millet, which are not put in the granary owing to their smallness.
9. Komwanrega	August-September	Kom—water. wanreg'—month or moon. The period of heavy rain.

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	Approximate Period.	Explanation.
10. Dawanrega	September—late September, early October.	Da—market. After the harvesting of the dark red or early guinea-corn, the Bari people of the Talansi tribe hold a great festival, during which they sacrifice to the spirit of their market-place. Bari is the largest market in their country. At this time, too, it is usual everywhere to sacrifice to the earth gods and departed ancestors.
11. Tenlebgre	Mid October	Beginning of the dry season. Ten',-tenga—earth. lebgre—has changed.
12. Chibunfu	November	Harvesting season. Chi—guinea corn. bunfu—knife with which the ears are cut off the standing stalks.

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104 The orthography is that of an educated native of these parts.

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